



# Montgomery County Council

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*From the Office of Councilmember Valerie Ervin*    January 25, 2013

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## **Montgomery Councilmember Ervin Invites Residents to Join Her in SNAP Challenge**

*From Feb. 4-8, Participants Will Live on a Limited Budget  
To Raise Awareness About Poverty*

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ROCKVILLE, Md., January 25, 2013—Montgomery County Councilmember Valerie Ervin is encouraging residents to get a better understanding of what living on a limited food budget really means when she leads a five-day challenge to eat on \$5 per day, Monday through Friday, February 4-8. This daily food budget is close to the average amount allotted to the nation's neediest residents through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program.

Ervin's "SNAP the Silence" Challenge not only seeks to raise awareness about poverty in Montgomery County, but aims to unite partners from all corners of the community—elected officials, non-profit leaders, students, and local organizers—in a collaboration that can produce a heightened understanding of the issues and solutions to combat them.

"We all know how expensive it is to live in Montgomery County," said Councilmember Ervin. "What many people may not know is how many working families struggle to put food on the table every day. The current economic crisis has forced more people than ever to ask for public assistance. This experience will give all of us a better understanding of what so many people in our nation—and many in our County—go through on a daily basis."

SNAP supports those whose wages are too low to lift them out of poverty, helping them put food on the table. The federal program allows individuals who qualify to purchase food to eat, or to buy seeds and plants that produce food for the household.

In October 2012, approximately 65,200 County residents participated in the SNAP program. From July through October 2012, an average of 2,400 households applied for SNAP benefits each month. For families that qualify for the SNAP program, the average daily benefit per person, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Program (USDA/FNS) statistics, is \$4.28.

Councilmember Ervin has been asking elected officials; community leaders; civic, student and religious groups; corporate organizations; and individuals to join the February Challenge and make a statement about helping those who live in poverty in the County.

Councilmember Ervin is inviting residents to join her in the challenge of living on \$5 of food per day. Those willing to take the challenge can sign up by going to: <http://tinyurl.com/snapthesilence> . The web site also shows others who have signed up to participate. So far more than 200 people have signed up to take the SNAP Challenge.

“We must do more to help those in our community who do not have enough to eat every day,” said Councilmember Ervin. “For me, the goal of the SNAP Challenge is to gain a greater appreciation for the struggles that many of our residents and families experience everyday as they make difficult choices to balance their budgets. I hope this challenge will help unite a coalition of advocates to encourage actions that will help those who have no alternative but to eat on \$5 per day.”

Participants will be able to share their experience of the week through a SNAP the Silence blog, a SNAP Facebook page and on Twitter at #SNAPtheSilence@ValerieErvin. On Friday, Feb. 8, participants are invited to join in a community engagement event on the topic of poverty in Silver Spring, which will be organized by IMPACT Silver Spring.

The SNAP Challenge rules include:

- No more than \$5 per day per person on food and beverages during the week.
- All food purchased and eaten, including dining out, must be included in the total spending.
- During the Challenge, participants can only eat food purchased for the week. They cannot eat food previously purchased.
- Avoid accepting free food from friends, family or coworkers.
- Keep track of receipts for food purchases throughout the week.

Participants can purchase any food such as breads, cereals, fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, poultry and dairy products. More information about food that can be purchased via SNAP is available at:

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact\\_info/widget.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact_info/widget.htm)

The USDA web site offers recipe tips on how to stretch a meager food budget. The site can be found at: <http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/>

Other resources on how to extend a food budget can be found at:

- [http://www.harvesters.org/\\_FileLibrary/FileImage/FoodStampChallengeRecipes.pdf](http://www.harvesters.org/_FileLibrary/FileImage/FoodStampChallengeRecipes.pdf)
- <http://www.foodstamped.com/learn-up/recipes>
- <http://fightingpovertywithfaith.com/f2/food-stamp-challenge/category/nutritious-recipes/>
- <http://www.delish.com/food/recalls-reviews/one-in-seven-americans-on-food-stamps-stretch-your-dollar-at-the-grocery>

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